



February 19, 2023

**Hello Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee,
Chairs: Osten and Walker, Vice Chairs Exum and Hartley and Ranking Members Berthel
and Nuccio,**

My name is Darlene Childs, I represent Hartford Community that Care. I am a lifelong Resident of Hartford, CT. In addition, I am also affiliated with the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance, (GHIAA). GHIAA is a network of over 50 diverse Faith Congregations across the Theological Spectrum, working together for justice. I would like to Thank You ALL, for the opportunity of allowing me to testify here today.

I am Testifying today in support of a \$20 million dollar allocation over 2 years to help Community Violence Reduction efforts across the State of Connecticut. Although this amount is not specifically in the Governor's budget, it is necessary and will help to save lives. Street Outreach Programs, such as, Hartford Communities That Care, Mothers United Against Violence, and Compass Youth Collaborative are all associated with up to 37% reductions in gun injuries. However, funding for gun violence intervention and prevention in the state of Connecticut is not consistent enough to help sustain these much-needed Organizations and move the needle to end gun violence, once and for all!

Therefore, we are seeking funding from the State to help support the work for Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention Organizations, who are on the front lines providing much needed services to Victims and Families of those affected by the multiple physical Traumas associated with these senseless acts!

The Connecticut Commission on Community Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention launched in August of this year through the Department of Public Health and was tasked to distribute 2.9 million dollars to Prevention and Intervention Organizations across the State. This is admirable, but it is not enough.

The Commission is made up of experts in various fields that intersect with gun violence, they were appointed to serve by a legislation passed in the 2022 legislative session. These experts include trauma surgeons, street level intervention specialists, public health professionals and those who have lost loved ones to violence. In their report, submitted to the legislature in January of this year, the Commission recommended that funding be allocated at the \$20 million dollar level over 2 years to provide continuity of resources and support.

It is extremely important for me to support this allocation simply because, I come before you as a Mother who has lost a Son to Gun Violence in the same city I call Home. My Son Chace Hernandez was a victim to gun violence in 2017. My son attended Fort Valley

State University where he was starting his studies in Business Law. He was born on my Birthday, 1/16/1990. But, on 2/18/2017 Chace had just turned 27 yrs old, he was snatched from his Parents, two Sons, Brothers, Cousins and our Entire Community, due to gun violence. Gun Violence has increased since my son was stolen from us!! Today, the pain is still fresh and, for all the families that have lost a Loved one in this manner, the pain NEVER subsides!! Approving this allocation would be a tremendous step in the right direction to help STOP these senseless shootings. Statistics shows, as of 2/23/23, 2,708 people have been killed due to Gun Violence. We were only 53 days into 2023. Do the math, that's 2,708 families and communities grieving the senseless loss of a loved one at the hands of another!! We have got to put a STOP to these senseless acts!! Approving these funds won't get our loved ones back but, it would be a tremendous start to help prevent future others from getting murdered. I'm not sure if you all were ever effected but, praying by approving this money, you will NEVER EVER feel the pain of losing a loved one in this manner!!

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before the committee today.

Respectfully Submitted,

Darlene R. Childs, M.S., V.P.P.
Hartford Communities That Care
2550 Main St. 2nd flr
Hartford, CT. 06120